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SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTIES MULTIPLY IN UNCERTAIN POLITICAL
ENVIRONMENT

¶1. (U) According to contacts, there are now approximately 75 political parties officially registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs. Before the coup, there were 47 official parties in Guinea although some sources indicate that there were a few more "unofficial" parties. Traditionally speaking, Guinean political parties are generally organized around a key political personality, often with specific ethnic ties. Guinea's newest parties are no exceptions.

¶2. (U) Newcomers to the political arena include former Prime Minister Francois Fall, controversial millionaire Mamadou Syllah, former Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate, and former Secretary General of the Presidency Ibrahima Keira. Political rallies are increasingly common with large gatherings of citizens sporting t-shirts or hats with their candidate's picture prominently displayed across the front. Party offices are also springing up all over Conakry. New, high profile political personalities, such as the ones listed above, are making their voices heard, appearing often in the printed press and broadcast media.

¶3. (SBU) Despite this seemingly dramatic increase in political interest, Guinea's political leaders, both old and new, are still saying little about what they actually hope to accomplish. With few exceptions, much of the rhetoric focuses not on a policy agenda, but rather, on criticisms of the CNDD and discussions of when and how to hold elections. The political dialogue is no different now than it was before the coup other than the fact that the targets have changed. Instead of opposing Conte, the "opposition leaders" are now opposing the CNDD.

¶4. (U) Newer political arrivals, such as Lansana Kouyate, are actively pushing to delay elections while long-time opposition leaders, such as Sidya Toure, are pushing for elections as soon as possible. The entry of each new political party corresponds to another seat around the table at Les Forces Vives meetings, and in some cases (such as with Mamadou Syllah), another seat at the negotiating table with the International Contact Group for Guinea (ICG-G). Each new addition also adds another voice to the discussion, which can then delay the decision-making process.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) Most of Guinea's political parties are small and attract only a handful of supporters. However, each political party is equal in the eyes of the law and therefore has a say in how the country moves through this transition period. More than 75 different political leaders are now entitled to sit around the table and debate with other members of Les Forces Vives. To put the steadily increasing size of this group in perspective, the dissolved National

Assembly only had 114 members. The number of parties is growing so quickly, with an average of about one new party per week, that it is difficult to get an accurate tally from one day to the next.

16. (SBU) Some contacts have speculated that new political leaders such as Mamadou Syllah and Ibrahima Keira, who are commonly perceived as Conte loyalists, entered the political arena in order to ingratiate themselves with the new regime by blocking progress towards elections. Others say that candidates such as Lansana Kouyate are actively pushing to delay elections because they need time to establish a voter base. Regardless of the motives, it is clear that the new players are adding a complicating dynamic. Rather than strengthening the collective political voice, in some cases they seem to be diluting it. END COMMENT.
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